General Assembly
Official Records
Seventy-second Session
Supplement No. 35

A/72/35

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

United Nations • New York, 2017

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ISSN 0255-2035

[5 September 2017]

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Letter of transmittal

[7 September 2017]

Mr. Secretary-General,

I have the honour to enclose herewith the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for submission to the General Assembly and circulation to all the competent bodies of the United Nations for necessary action, as appropriate, in accordance with paragraphs 2 and 10 of its resolution 71/20 of 30 November 2016.

The report covers the period from 4 October 2016 to 5 September 2017.

(*Signed*) Fodé **Seck**
Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the
Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

His Excellency Mr. António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations
New York

Chapter I
Introduction

1. The present report by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has been submitted pursuant to resolution 71/20 (2016) of the General Assembly adopted on 30 November 2016. It contains information on the implementation by the Committee of its programme of work, designed to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights, including through maintaining international awareness of and mobilizing efforts aimed at achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting solution of the question of Palestine, enhancing international solidarity with the plight of the Palestinian people and supporting the Government of the State of Palestine in its capacity-building efforts to build a viable and sustainable future independent State of Palestine.

2. In chapter II the Committee reviews the situation relating to the question of Palestine, including events that have taken place on the ground.

3. Chapters III and IV outline the mandate of the Committee as set out by the General Assembly and provide information on the membership of the Committee and the organization of its work from 4 October 2016 to 5 September 2017.

4. Chapter V covers the action taken by the Committee, including participation in meetings of the Security Council and its continuing dialogue with intergovernmental organizations and civil society. The chapter also contains information about the international conferences and capacity-building workshops organized by the Committee, as well as other mandated activities and events carried out by the Division for Palestinian Rights on the Committee's behalf.

5. Chapter VI provides an overview of the special information programme on the question of Palestine carried out by the Department of Public Information in accordance with General Assembly resolution 71/22 of 30 November 2016.

6. The conclusions and recommendations of the Committee to the General Assembly are set out in chapter VII of the report.

Chapter II
Review of the situation relating to the question of Palestine

Security Council and resolution 2334 (2016)

7. On 14 October 2016, Malaysia, with Angola, Egypt, Senegal and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, hosted an Arria formula meeting entitled "Illegal Israeli settlements: obstacles to peace and the two-State solution", concerning the negative impact of Israeli settlements on the Palestinian people and their quest for self-determination and independence, and the prospects for achieving a just, lasting and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The meeting heard first-hand information from experts and civil society representatives, as well as statements from members of the Security Council and other Member States condemning the ongoing expansion of Israeli settlements and demanding their cessation.

8. On 23 December 2016, the Security Council adopted resolution 2334 (2016), sponsored by Malaysia, New Zealand, Senegal and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, a landmark document in which the Council reiterated its vision of a region where two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, lived side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders. The Council reaffirmed its relevant resolutions, and the obligation of Israel, the occupying Power, to abide scrupulously by its legal obligations and responsibilities under the Fourth Geneva Convention. It stressed that the status quo was not sustainable and that significant steps, consistent with the transition contemplated by prior agreements, were urgently needed (a) to stabilize the situation and reverse negative trends on the ground, which were steadily eroding the two-State solution and entrenching a one-State reality; and (b) to create the conditions for successful final status negotiations and for advancing the two-State solution through those negotiations. The Council reaffirmed that establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, had no legal validity and constituted a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace, and demanded their immediate and complete cessation. It also condemned all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and expressed grave concern that continuing Israeli settlement activities were dangerously imperilling the viability of the two-State solution. The Council also underlined that it would not recognize any changes to the 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations. It called for immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, as well as acts of provocation and destruction, and called for accountability in that regard. The Council also called upon all parties to continue to exert collective efforts to launch credible negotiations on all final status issues in the Middle East peace process. It urged in that regard the intensification of international and regional diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving, without delay, a just, lasting and comprehensive solution, on the basis of the relevant resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map, and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Council every three months on the implementation of the resolution.

9. In addition to reporting pursuant to resolution 2334 (2016), the Secretary-General continued the efforts of his predecessors in support of a peaceful solution to the question of Palestine. In his statements, including on 5 June 2017 on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, he reiterated the position of the international community, enshrined in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory had to end through a negotiated two-State outcome that would

meet Israeli security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, and would achieve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. From 28 to 30 August he visited Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, where he held talks with the leaders of both States.

Human Rights Council

10. In his annual report to the Human Rights Council on the human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories (A/HRC/35/19), the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights assessed the overall rate of "full implementation" by Israel of its human rights obligations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory at 0.4 per cent. In its response to the second report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, contained in the addendum to the report, despite the fact that the International Court of Justice, Security Council and General Assembly have clearly affirmed the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, along with the core international human rights covenants, Israel expressed the view that the human rights conventions do not apply beyond its territory (see A/HRC/25/15/Add.1, para. 56).

11. On 24 March, the Human Rights Council adopted four resolutions in which it: (a) emphasized the need to ensure accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (resolution 34/28); (b) reaffirmed the inalienable, permanent and unqualified right of the Palestinian people to self-determination (resolution 34/29); (c) demanded that Israel cease all practices and actions that violate the human rights of the Palestinian people or alter the character, status and demographic composition of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (resolution 34/30); and (d) demanded that Israel immediately cease all settlement activities and reverse the settlement policy, and requested that all parties concerned, including United Nations bodies, ensure the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the independent international fact-finding mission to investigate the implications of settlements on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (resolution 34/31).

12. Pursuant to resolution 31/36, the Human Rights Council requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to produce a database of all business enterprises involved in the activities described in the report of the independent international fact-finding mission to investigate the implications of the Israeli settlements on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (A/HRC/22/63, para. 96), to be updated annually, and to transmit the data therein in the form of a report to the Council at its thirty-fourth session. At its organizational meeting on 13 February 2017, the Council decided, for one time only, to defer its consideration of that report to the end of December 2017.

13. During its annual field visit to the region in July 2017 to gather information for the annual report to the General Assembly, the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories observed that the Israeli authorities continued with policies and practices that negatively impact the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.[1]

[1] See OHCHR, "End of mission statement of the United Nations Special Committee to investigate Israeli practices", 17 July 2017. Available from http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21881&LangID=E.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

14. On 2 May 2017, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted resolution 201 EX/PX/DR.30.1, entitled "Occupied Palestine", in which it, inter alia, reaffirmed the importance of the Old City of Jerusalem for the three monotheistic religions, reminded that all actions by Israel altering the character of Jerusalem were null and void; and reaffirmed that the sacred sites in Bethlehem and Hebron were an integral part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, shared the conviction affirmed by the international community that the two sites are of religious significance for Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and deplored the ongoing Israeli works which harmfully affect the integrity of the site as well as the denial of access to places of worship. On 7 July (WHC/17/41.COM/18), the UNESCO World Heritage Committee inscribed Hebron/ Al-Khalil Old Town, which is the site of the Cave of the Patriarchs/Ibrahimi Mosque, sacred to Jews and Muslims, on the World Heritage List, and stated that the property was faced with serious threats which could have deleterious effects on its inherent characteristics and for which an immediate action by the World Heritage Committee was needed.

Restrictions on non-governmental organizations and peace activists

15. On 3 March 2017, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Michael Lynk, and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Michel Forst, expressed deep concern about the escalating restrictions the Government of Israel was placing on human rights defenders in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and called on Israel to observe its obligations under international law to protect human rights defenders and promote their work.

Intra-Palestinian reconciliation

16. The ongoing Palestinian political divide continued to be an impediment to the fulfilment of Palestinian national aspirations. On 16 March, Hamas announced the formation of an administrative committee to manage the Gaza Strip, a de facto parallel government. On 3 May, the movement unveiled its new charter that, while falling short of recognizing Israel, accepted for the first time the idea of a Palestinian State within the 1967 borders.

17. Since April, the Government of the State of Palestine has reduced the payments to nearly 60,000 public sector employees in the Gaza Strip, and in May also reduced payment for electricity supplied to the enclave by Israel, arguing that Hamas, as the receiver of taxes in Gaza, should pay for such services.

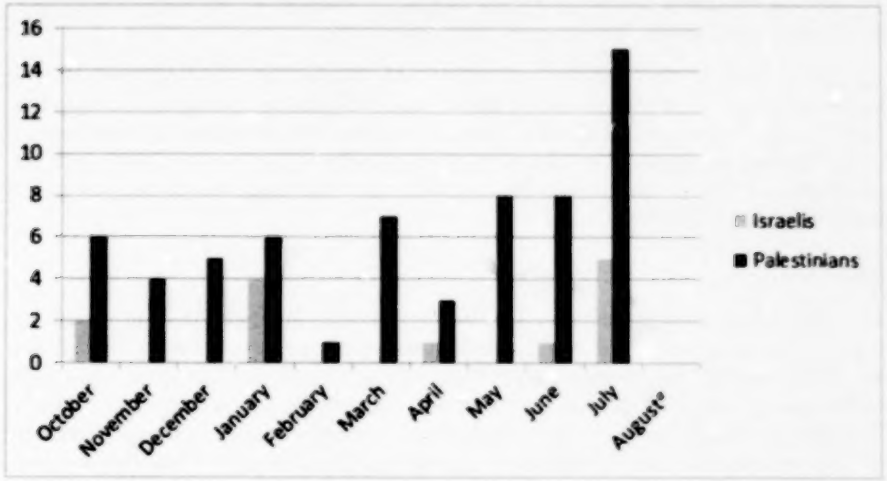
18. Municipal elections were held in the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem, on 13 May. A boycott by Hamas, in addition to Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, prevented the holding of elections in the Gaza Strip. According to the Central Elections Commission, Fatah maintained a majority of the 3,253 local council seats (1,260 by acclamation, 429 in contest). Independent candidates won 1,204 seats (195 by acclamation, 1,009 in contest). Other parties and lists gained the remaining 360 seats.

19. Prospects of reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah remain low. Both continue to issue calls for a unified government and open elections, including for the Palestinian parliament and President, throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, but have not been able to agree on modalities. A number of reconciliation meetings and efforts by third parties, including by Egypt, Qatar and the Russian Federation, have not yielded any measurable progress.

Security

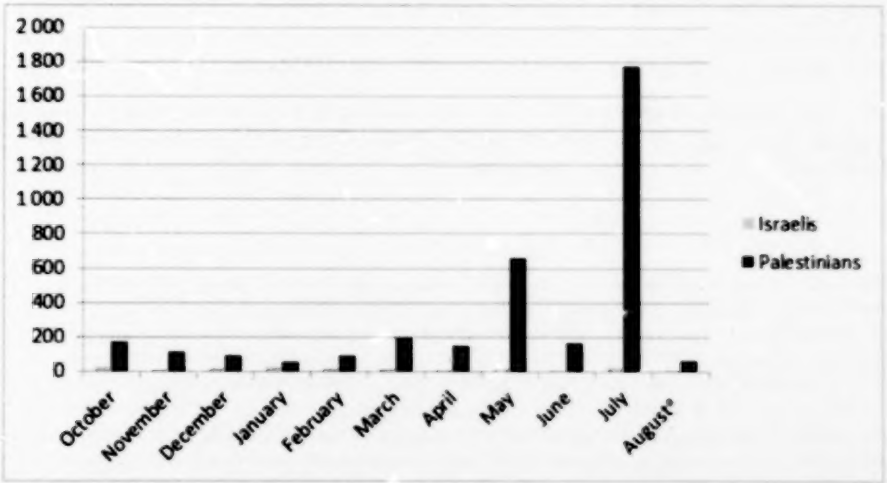
20. The reporting period was marked by continuing tensions, military incursions and raids by the Israeli occupying forces and clashes with Palestinian youth and protesters in many parts of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, on an almost daily basis. Settler violence against the Palestinian civilian people also continued. During the reporting period, a total of 52 Palestinians, including 4 women and 10 children, and 8 Israelis, including 5 women and 1 child, were killed in conflict-related violence, and many more were injured (see figures I and II).

Figure I
Number of Israelis and Palestinians killed during the reporting period



Source: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Available from http://www.ochaopt.org/.
[a] As at 14 August 2017.

Figure II
Number of Israelis and Palestinians injured during the reporting period



Source: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Available from http://www.ochaopt.org/.
[a] As at 14 August 2017.

Jerusalem

21. Israeli occupying forces in East Jerusalem have at times increased restrictions on movement and access to the holy sites, fomenting discontent, resistance and even violent actions. In July, an attack on Israeli security officers by Israeli Arab citizens at Al-Haram al-Sharif and the subsequent change of the historic status quo at the holy site resulted in a crisis that also involved Jordan, custodian of the Muslim and Christian holy sites in the City, and the Islamic Waqf. International efforts helped to solve the crisis and the Government of Israel agreed to revert to the original security procedures at the compound. In confrontations during the crisis, 14 people were killed (6 Palestinians, 6 Israelis and 2 Jordanians) and over a thousand injured, the vast majority of them Palestinians. On 21 July, in the course of the crisis, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas suspended contacts of the State of Palestine with Israel on all levels, including security coordination.

22. According to the Ministry of Interior of Israel, from the beginning of the occupation in 1967 until the end of 2016, Israel revoked the residency status of at least 14,595 Palestinians from East Jerusalem. The discriminatory system pushes many Palestinians to leave in what amounts to forcible transfers, a serious violation of international law, which could amount to a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

The Gaza Strip

23. The blockade imposed by Israel on the Gaza Strip since 2007, in breach of international law, continued into its tenth year. As the occupying Power,[2] Israel has an obligation to the civilian population, in particular, to facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief. Despite warnings issued for years, including by the United Nations country team, Gaza has continued on its trajectory of socioeconomic de-development. Ongoing humanitarian assistance and international service delivery, especially through the services of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), are partially mitigating the impact, but cannot stop the downward spiral that would make Gaza "unliveable" by 2020.[3]

24. Israel also continues to enforce access restrictions in unilaterally determined wide buffer areas inside the enclave along Gaza's perimeter areas and to severely restrict access to the sea by Palestinian fishermen, routinely harassing them and firing at them, endangering lives and impairing their livelihoods.

25. Agricultural land damaged in the 2014 conflict is years away from yielding a harvest comparable to pre-conflict levels. Most of the damaged businesses have been unable to fully resume operations. Over 1 million Palestinians in Gaza are

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[2] See *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Advisory Opinion, I.C.J. Reports 2004*, p. 136, para. 101. Available from http://www.icj-cij.org/files/case-related/131/131-20040709-ADV-01-00-EN.pdf. See also, for example, Security Council resolutions 1860 (2009) and 2334 (2016); General Assembly resolutions 62/181 and 63/98); Human Rights Council resolution 10/18; and reports of the Secretary-General, including A/HRC/34/38, para. 9. Claims by Israel that its disengagement from Gaza in 2005 amounted to the end of the occupation of the Gaza Strip were rejected on the basis that the control that Israel retained of Gaza's air space, sea space and external borders continuously amounted to effective control (see report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, A/61/470, para. 7).

[3] See United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, "Gaza ten years later", July 2017. Available from https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/gaza_10_years_later_-_11_july_2017.pdf.

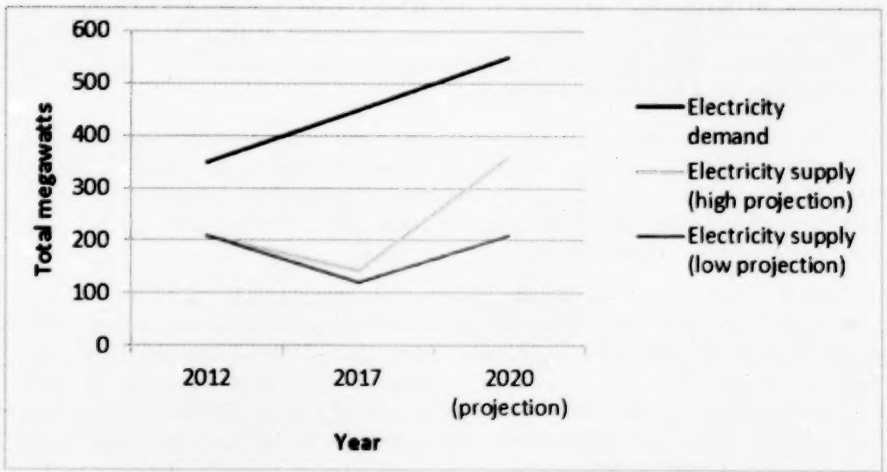
moderately to severely food insecure, despite many of them already receiving food assistance or other forms of social transfers.

26. The Gazan economy remains stagnant, and the poverty level stands at about 40 per cent. Over 42 per cent of Gazans are unemployed. Especially hard hit are the youth; as of the end of 2016, 60.3 per cent of 20 to 24-year-olds and 52.1 per cent of 25 to 29-year-olds were out of work, an increase of 10 and 16 per cent, respectively, over the previous 10 years. In the last 10 years, unemployment among women almost doubled, to 64.4 per cent, making women's labour force participation in Gaza among the lowest in the world. In the meantime the ability of Palestinians to move in and out of Gaza remains an important lifeline for their living conditions.

27. Young persons in the Gaza Strip — 43 per cent of the population is below the age of 15 — face many challenges. They face social, cultural and economic marginalization and isolation. In exchange for protection or a shelter for them and their families, some of them drop out of school to work low-skilled jobs, leave their jobs or marry at an early age.

28. Recent months have seen a significant decline in energy supply, including shortages caused by the continuing impasse between the Government of the State of Palestine and Hamas. As the Government stopped waiving taxes on fuel for the Gaza Power Plant and the de facto authorities refused to purchase the taxed fuel, the operation of the power plant came to a halt in April. As a result, Gaza's energy supply was reduced to only 120 megawatts and daily blackouts reached 20 hours per day (see figure III).

Figure III
Electricity in the Gaza Strip: supply and demand



Source: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Available from http://www.ochaopt.org/.

29. By the end of 2017, the only water source in Gaza will be depleted, and irreversibly so by 2020, unless immediate remedial action is taken. Access to safe drinking water in Gaza through the public water network plummeted from 98.3 per cent in 2000 to a mere 10.5 per cent in 2014, compared to almost 97 per cent in the West Bank. Palestinians in Gaza are forced to rely on, and pay for, water from water tanks, containers and bottled water.

Table
Water and sanitation in the Gaza Strip

Indicator	*2012*	*2017*	*2020 (projection)*
Share of aquifer water	10%	20%	0%
Year when aquifer may become unusable	2016	2017	Aquifer will be irreversibly damaged
Amount of untreated or partially treated wastewater pumped into the ocean	90,000 cm per day	100,000-108,000 cm per day	120,000 cm per day

Source: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Available from http://www.ochaopt.org/.

Settlements

30. During the reporting period, there was an alarming increase in settlement construction by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and, most recently, Security Council resolution 2334 (2016).

31. On 23 November 2016, the occupying authorities decided to advance plans for 500 new settlement units in the illegal settlement of Ramat Shlomo, further encroaching on the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Beit Hanina.

32. In January, two major announcements were made for a total of 5,500 settlement units in several settlements in Area C of the occupied West Bank. On 1 February 2017, the occupying Power announced its intention to establish a new settlement to house the residents of the illegal Amona outpost, following the demolition of the latter on 2 February by order of the Israeli High Court of Justice. Construction in at least four East Jerusalem settlements was enabled by the granting of building permits for over 900 units.

33. On 6 February, the Israeli Knesset passed a law (the so-called "regularization bill") that would retroactively "legalize" Israeli settlements on privately owned Palestinian land. The bill was roundly condemned by the international community; Israeli and Palestinian non-governmental organizations have since appealed the ruling in the Israeli Supreme Court.

34. Spring 2017 saw a further substantial increase in settlement-related announcements, with plans for nearly 4,000 settlement units advanced and 2,000 tenders issued. Plans for some 3,200 units were also advanced through the various stages of the planning process in 22 settlements in Area C of the occupied West Bank, including over 2,800 housing units. In East Jerusalem 770 units reached the final approval stage, and building permits for more than 360 additional units were granted by the occupying authorities.

35. In July, plans were advanced for over 2,300 settlement units in East Jerusalem — 30 per cent more than were advanced during all of 2016. This includes plans for some 1,600 units expanding a ring of settlements north of East Jerusalem, as well as other plans that may involve demolition of Palestinian houses. In addition to the confiscation of Palestinian land and properties as a result of such settlement activities, the construction of all of the above-mentioned settlement units will entail the transfer of tens of thousands more Israeli settlers to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

36. On 25 July, Israeli settlers seized an apartment in a building located in the H2 area of Hebron city, in violation of an Israeli order declaring part of the building

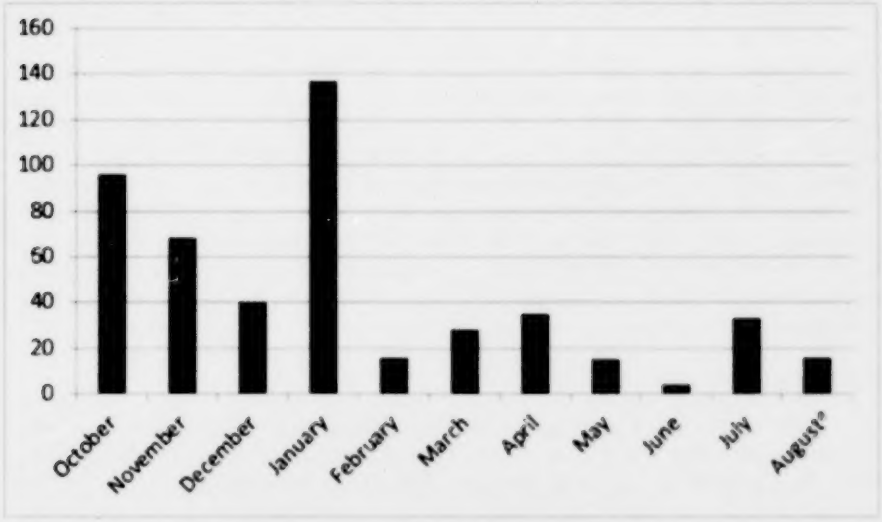
as a closed military area pending a three-year-old challenge by a Palestinian family to the settlers' ownership claims. A Palestinian family of 16, half of them children, residing in another apartment of the same building, have reported access restrictions and intimidation since the takeover.

37. There are currently at least 370,000 Israelis living in some 130 settlements in Area C, including at least 85,000 settlers deep in the West Bank. Combined with some 200,000 in East Jerusalem, this brings the total Israeli settler population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to at least 570,000.

Demolitions and displacement

38. No progress was noted during the reporting period on return to homes and return of property of Palestine refugees. Meanwhile, the demolition of Palestinian homes and structures escalated, with most destroyed under the pretext that they were built without Israeli-issued permits, and continued to exacerbate Palestinian civilian displacement, including among the Bedouin community (see figures IV and V).

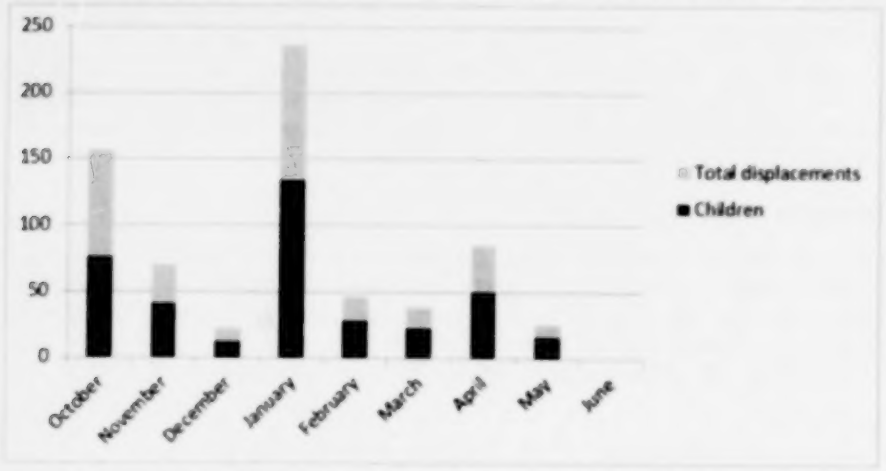
Figure IV
Demolitions of Palestinian structures during the reporting period



Source: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Available from http://www.ochaopt.org/.
* As at 14 August 2017.

Figure V

Number of Palestinians displaced through demolitions during the reporting period



Source: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Available from http://www.ochaopt.org/.

39. As noted by the Quartet, 70 per cent of Area C has been unilaterally taken for exclusive Israeli use, mostly through inclusion in the boundaries of local and regional settlement councils or designations of "State land". Nearly all of the remaining 30 percent of Area C, much of which is private Palestinian property, is effectively off-limits for Palestinian development because it requires permits from the Israeli occupying authorities that are almost never granted. The process of designating additional "State land" in Area C, which potentially impacts any land that cannot clearly be established as Palestinian private property, is ongoing, causing high insecurity to hundreds of Palestinian families and threatening them with forced displacement.

Restriction of movement

40. Israel continued to maintain security barriers restricting Palestinian movement in Area C and other areas of the West Bank in addition to those around the Gaza Strip, resulting in the physical fragmentation of the Palestinian territory and the separation and isolation of Palestinian communities. During the reporting period, increased restrictions were imposed, affecting the access of farmers to their agricultural land isolated by the wall under construction by Israel since 2002, 88 per cent of which is inside the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In East Jerusalem, the wall physically divides Palestinian communities into two separate sides, in place of what was previously only a jurisdictional division. In May, Israeli occupying forces added new measures to the already severe limitations on Palestinian movement in Hebron, a city that is segregated into areas Palestinians are forbidden to enter and areas where they are permitted to reside.

41. The construction of Israeli-only transportation corridors, or bypass roads, in the occupied West Bank pointed to a steady effort towards annexation of those areas. In the absence of measures to ease freedom of movement for Palestinians in the occupied West Bank to Israel and the Gaza Strip, the location of the corridors continued to be clearly aimed at facilitating and supporting the presence of settlers in the West Bank.

Palestinian prisoners

42. According to the Israel Prison Service, as of May 2017 a total of 6,020 Palestinians were held in Israeli prisons, 475 of them under administrative detention. Palestinian detainees are jailed inside Israel, in contravention of international law that stipulates that they be held within the occupied territory, in turn leading to restrictions on family visits.

43. On 17 April 2017, 1,500 Palestinian prisoners held by Israel launched an open-ended mass hunger strike to press for basic rights and draw attention to the difficult humanitarian conditions endured by Palestinian prisoners and detainees. Following international pressure and assurances from Israel, the strike ended on 27 May with an agreement between Palestinian prisoners and Israeli authorities.

44. The United Nations has also documented a growing use of administrative detention by Palestinian security forces in the West Bank and arbitrary detention by Hamas against perceived political opponents, including members of Fatah and former personnel of the Palestinian Authority in the Gaza Strip. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has also consistently received and documented reliable allegations of torture and ill-treatment of Palestinian detainees in the West Bank and in Gaza, including cases that led to death.

Socioeconomic situation

45. As of early 2017, one in two Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was in need of humanitarian assistance, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. All 4.8 million Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, are now affected by protection risks, including 350,000 Palestinians living in 67 West Bank communities vulnerable to settler violence.

46. On 22 February, the Government of the State of Palestine launched the National Policy Agenda for 2017-2022,[4] in which it identified ending the occupation as its first national priority. Aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the agenda has three pillars: path to independence, Government reform and sustainable development. It identifies 30 national policies. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the State of Palestine aims to support those national development priorities.

47. Israel, as the occupying Power, controls all shared surface and ground water resources, leaving only 15 per cent for Palestinian use. In January both sides agreed to renew the activity of the Israeli-Palestinian Joint Water Committee to improve water infrastructure and supply in the occupied West Bank and Gaza.

48. The protracted occupation has significantly undermined agriculture in Palestine, as both horizontal and vertical expansion of the agriculture sector has been restricted for decades. In addition to constraints on water use resulting from access restrictions, land resources in Area C are underutilized. Irrigating the unexploited area as well as accessing additional range and forest land could deliver an additional $704 million in value-added to the Palestinian economy, equivalent to 7 per cent of gross domestic product.

49. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the wall has had a significant impact on agricultural productivity in the West Bank, with some farmers having been separated from their lands on the other side of the wall. For example, the yield of olive trees in the area between the wall and the Green Line has been reduced by approximately 65 per cent in comparison with equivalent trees in areas accessible all year round.

[4] Available from https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/npa_english_final_approved_20_2_2017_printed.pdf.

Chapter III
Mandate of the Committee

50. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was established by the General Assembly by resolution 3376 (XXX) of 10 November 1975, with the task of recommending a programme designed to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights to self-determination and to national independence and sovereignty, and to return to the homes and property from which they had been displaced, as recognized by the Assembly in its resolution 3236 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974. The mandate of the Committee has evolved considerably over the years into greater advocacy for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the mobilization of assistance. Additional information about the Committee is available on the website maintained by the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat at http://www.un.org/unispal/.

51. Most recently, on 30 November 2016, the General Assembly renewed the mandate of the Committee (resolution 71/20), requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Division for Palestinian Rights with the necessary resources to carry out its programme of work (resolution 71/21) and requested the continuation of the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat (resolution 71/22). The Assembly also adopted resolution 71/23, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine", in which it reaffirmed the near-consensus international position regarding the components of a just, lasting and comprehensive solution.

52. The work of the Committee is fully aligned with the decisions of the main United Nations intergovernmental bodies such as the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and with the work of the Secretary-General and the programmes, funds and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, with which it collaborates extensively.

Chapter IV
Organization of work

A. Membership and officers

53. The Committee is composed of 26 Member States, representing different regional groups and supporting the international consensus for a two-State solution: Afghanistan, Belarus, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Cuba, Cyprus, Ecuador, Guinea, Guyana, India, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Namibia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

54. The 24 observers at the Committee meetings are Algeria, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, China, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates, Viet Nam and Yemen, as well as the State of Palestine, the African Union, the League of Arab States (LAS) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

55. The day-to-day tasks of the Committee are undertaken by its Bureau. At its 381st meeting, on 16 February 2017, the Committee elected Fodé Seck (Senegal) as Chair, and Mahmoud Saikal (Afghanistan), Anayansi Rodríguez Camejo (Cuba), Dian Triansyah Djani (Indonesia), Neville Melvin Gertze (Namibia) and María Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) as Vice-Chairs, and Carmelo Inguanez (Malta) as Rapporteur. The State of Palestine participates in the Bureau's work as an observer.

56. The current composition of the Security Council includes, as elected members, four members and observers of the Committee: Bolivia, Egypt, Senegal and Ukraine.

B. Participation in the work of the Committee

57. As in previous years, the Committee reconfirmed that all States Members of the United Nations and observers wishing to participate in its work were welcome to do so. In accordance with established practice, the State of Palestine participated in the work of the Committee as an observer, attended all of its meetings, conducted briefings and made observations and proposals for consideration by the Committee and its Bureau. All efforts were made by the Working Group of the Committee to guarantee participation of civil society organizations, including Israeli pro-peace actors.

Chapter V
Action taken by the Committee

A. Action taken in accordance with General Assembly resolution 71/20

1. Action taken in the Security Council

58. During the open debates at the Security Council held on 19 October 2016 and 17 January, 20 April and 25 July 2017, the Committee delivered statements highlighting the situation and calling upon the Council to take appropriate actions to address ongoing violations and to uphold its responsibilities to contribute to a peaceful settlement of the conflict (see S/PV.7792; S/PV.7863; S/PV.7929; S/PV.8011 (resumption 1)).

2. Action taken by the Bureau of the Committee

59. The Members of the Bureau represented the Committee at all international conferences organized in accordance with the programme of work. On the margins of those events, the Committee delegation met with senior officials from the respective host countries. In particular, in Managua, the Committee delegation met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua and parliamentarians. In Mexico City, the Committee delegation held consultations with high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico and parliamentarians. In Baku, the Committee delegation met with high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan.

60. On 2 November 2016, the Bureau held its second annual retreat to review the work of the Committee. Issues discussed included the 2017 programme of work of the Committee, the goals for and organization of international events of the Committee and ideas for better outreach to and engagement with Member States and civil society.

61. On 22 March 2017, the Bureau met with the new Secretary-General, António Guterres, to familiarize him with the work of the Committee and to ensure his continuing support. The Bureau conveyed the sense of urgency among Member States regarding the implementation of the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, in the face of the continuing Israeli occupation and the deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation, the spike in settlement activities and the one-State reality emerging. The alleviation of the suffering of the Palestinian people and the realization of their inalienable rights continues to be perceived as a litmus test of the credibility of the Organization. In particular, the Bureau requested the Secretary-General to make full use of one of the main tools currently at his disposal, his quarterly reports on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016).

62 On 18 May 2017, in a letter addressed to the Secretary-General, the Committee conveyed its position regarding the quarterly report, namely, that the report should be substantive, in writing, and should clearly indicate whether the relevant parties are in compliance with the provisions of the resolution.

63. The Chair of the Committee delivered a statement at the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of OIC, held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, on 10 and 11 July 2017.

B. Action taken by the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 71/20 and 71/21

1. Committee meetings at Headquarters

64. During the reporting period, the Committee held six periodic meetings at United Nations Headquarters in New York, in addition to the eight informal meetings of its Bureau and the meetings of its Working Group. At its 378th meeting, on 3 October 2016, the Committee adopted its annual report. At its 379th meeting, on 15 November, the Committee approved for submission to the General Assembly four draft resolutions entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People", "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat", "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat" and "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine". The 380th meeting, on 29 November, marked the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. At its 381st meeting, on 16 February 2017, attended by the Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, the Committee re-elected its Chair, Vice-Chairs and Rapporteur and adopted its annual programme of work. At its 382nd meeting on 17 May, the Committee focused on the reports of the international conferences already held and approved the programmes for upcoming international conferences. At its 383rd meeting, on 8 August, the Committee received reports on its most recent international meetings.

65. On 17 March, the Committee organized a public event on the margins of the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women at United Nations Headquarters in New York, entitled "In conversation with Dr. Hanan Ashrawi". Ms. Ashrawi is a member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

66. To mark Palestinian Prisoners' Day, on 18 April, the Committee, in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations, organized the screening of the film, *Ghost Hunting*.

67. The above-mentioned public events and others organized by the Working Group of the Committee (see paras. 80-85) were attended by representatives of Governments, intergovernmental organizations and entities of the United Nations system, as well as parliamentarians and representatives of civil society and the media.

2. Programme of international meetings and conferences

68. During the reporting period the following international events were held under the auspices of the Committee:

(a) United Nations Roundtable on the Question of Palestine, entitled "Building Bridges with the Palestinian Diaspora in Central America", Managua, 4 February 2017, and Committee delegation visit to Mexico City, 7 February 2017

69. The Round Table built on the outcome of the 2016 Palestinian diaspora convention in Bethlehem and facilitated interaction between Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the diaspora, the latter from 10 countries in Central and South America. Participants discussed how to strengthen international advocacy to end the Israeli occupation and promote socioeconomic development in Palestine. The Round Table adopted the Managua Declaration, committing participants and their organizations to strengthening cooperation between a variety of diaspora communities, with the aim of establishing a regional bloc in Central America, attending upcoming meetings at Headquarters in June and in Santiago de Chile in October 2017 and increasing the number of visits to Palestine.

70. On 7 February, after participating in the Round Table, the Committee delegation visited Mexico City for meetings with high-level officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Chairs of two foreign affairs commissions of the Senate, as well as with the President of the Mexico-Palestine Friendship Group in the Chamber of Deputies. The Permanent Representative of Nicaragua and the Permanent Observer of Palestine also gave a presentation to students, policymakers and diplomats at the Diplomatic Academy.

(b) United Nations Capacity-Building Workshop on Sustainable Development Goals for Staff of the State of Palestine, entitled "Partnerships for Empowering a Future State of Palestine: Sustainable Development Goal 17 and South-South and Triangular Cooperation", Beirut, 27 and 28 April 2017

71. The Workshop was organized in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) for mid-level Palestinian civil servants engaged in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. It aimed to establish a common understanding of the practice of South-South and triangular cooperation as an important modality for attaining the Goals in Palestine and provided practical tools and methods to comprehend the inherent challenges and opportunities. The Workshop built in part on the 2016 United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, under the theme "Agenda 2030: paving the way towards a peaceful, independent and sustainable State of Palestine", and took into account other capacity-building initiatives of the United Nations country team in Palestine.

(c) United Nations Forum to Mark Fifty Years of Occupation, entitled "Ending the Occupation: the Path to Independence, Justice and Peace for Palestine" and "Creating the Space for Human Rights, Development and a Just Peace", New York, 29 and 30 June 2017

72. The Forum consisted of two day-long events, the first of which focused on diplomatic and political aspects of the ongoing occupation and the second on civil society advocacy strategies and recommendations.

73. The first day brought together international experts, representatives of the diplomatic community and civil society, including Palestinians and Israelis, as well as academics and students of diverse backgrounds and views. A series of moderated interactive panels underscored the importance of ending the occupation as an antecedent step towards a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Participants noted that, notwithstanding the costs to Israel, given its current prosperity and growing international relations, including within the Group of 77 and China, Israel does not have an incentive to end the occupation and act in favour of a two-State solution. Participants stressed the need for the international community to insist on ensuring accountability and enforcement of international law, including relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016). While experts recognized that a peaceful and lasting solution was not imminent, they nevertheless stressed the importance of multilateral peace efforts and of working constructively with civil society partners towards an eventual two-State solution.

74. On the second day, participants included representatives of leading Palestinian, Israeli and international human rights organizations, conflict prevention and diplomatic advisory groups, women's and youth groups, political parties, churches, the Jewish community in the United States and the Palestinian diaspora, including in the United States and Chile. Discussions focused on field perspectives, the use of alternative frameworks for analysis and policy recommendations to ensure accountability and pave the way for a just and lasting peace, in addition to concerns expressed about the shrinking space for civil society in the absence of political will.

A common thread in the discussions was the call by and on civil society to make a difference through its own actions while continuing to pressure Governments to take measures to ensure respect for international law and United Nations resolutions.

(d) International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, entitled "Jerusalem and the International Community: Providing Political and Economic Support", Baku, 20 and 21 July 2017, in collaboration with OIC

75. The Conference aimed to present ideas and proposals about ways in which the international community, especially OIC member States, could provide concrete support to the Palestinian population in Jerusalem, with a focus on education and training to foster resilience and on economic recovery and development.

76. Against the backdrop of tensions and confrontations at the al-Aqsa Mosque, participants warned that a continued violation of the historic status quo at the Haram al-Sharif risked inflaming religious sensitivities and shifting the Israeli-Palestinian/Arab conflict from a political to a religious one. To address the deteriorating socioeconomic situation of the Palestinian population in East Jerusalem, the participants called for an increase in outside support, for example, through direct investment in tourism and education infrastructure, provision of education and capacity-building opportunities abroad and permission for Arab Christians and Muslims to go on pilgrimage to East Jerusalem while under occupation.

77. The Conference ended with the issuance of a communiqué on behalf of the organizers, the Committee and OIC, strongly condemning the closure of the al-Aqsa Mosque and calling upon the international community to reaffirm respect for the historic status quo and to compel Israel to rescind all measures violating it.

3. Cooperation with intergovernmental and regional organizations

78. Throughout the year, the Committee continued its cooperation with intergovernmental organizations. The Committee appreciates the active participation of the representatives of those organizations in the various international events held under its auspices and the co-sponsorship provided by OIC to organize the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem. The African Union, LAS and OIC, as observers to the Committee, regularly attend the meetings of the Committee and its Working Group and participate in their work.

79. On 10 and 11 July 2017, a Committee delegation attended the forty-fourth session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers in Abidjan.

4. Cooperation with civil society

80. In October 2016, the Working Group of the Committee adopted a new strategy with the overarching objective of promoting the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people through strengthened cooperation with civil society.

81. In accordance with its new strategy, the Working Group of the Committee, chaired by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Malta, supported action by civil society organizations promoting the rights of Palestinians and a just peace through events at Headquarters, which all Member and observer States were invited to attend, including the following:

(a) Briefing by Al Haq, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch on issues related to the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 18 October 2016;

(b) Address by Suhad Babaa, Executive Director of Just Vision, at the special meeting of the Committee held in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November 2016;

(c) Conversation with Palestinian political leader Hanan Ashrawi, on 17 March 2017. The event was held on the margins of the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women;

(d) Civil society forum held on 30 June 2017, entitled "Ending the Occupation: Creating the Space for Human Rights, Development and a Just Peace", as part of a two-day event to mark fifty years of occupation.

82. Support to Palestinian and other civil society organizations was further provided by inviting civil society representatives based in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel to attend the Forum on 29 and 30 June. In addition, the Working Group facilitated speaking engagements by civil society representatives at other events, including a presentation by Nur Arafeh, Policy Fellow with Al Shabaka: the Palestinian Policy Network, at a summer course entitled "Palestine: Half a Century of Occupation — a Legal, Political and Human Approach", held in Madrid from 3 to 7 July 2017.

83. To expand its network of civil society partners, the Committee continued to reach out to Palestinian, Israeli and other organizations through its Working Group and the Division for Palestinian Rights. Civil society representatives were invited to participate in all public international meetings organized under the auspices of the Committee. Additional organizations and parliamentarians were involved in the work of the Committee through activities in Nicaragua and Mexico; liaison with United Nations field offices and focal points of non-governmental organizations at Headquarters; participation in conferences and meetings organized by civil society in New York and Washington, D.C.; informal consultations; and desk research.

84. During the reporting period, new civil society partnerships to mobilize international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people were developed with Palestinian diaspora communities in Latin America, Canada and the United States.

85. The Division for Palestinian Rights continued to maintain a web page on civil society and the question of Palestine (https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/ngo.htm), supporting outreach to civil society organizations, increasing their awareness of Committee activities and fostering cooperation. The weekly online bulletin *NGO Action News* (https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/add2.htm) kept the Working Group of the Committee updated on civil society action on the question of Palestine. Through its dissemination among approximately 900 civil society organizations from around the world, the publication supports efforts to exchange information, build alliances and coordinate civil society initiatives to promote the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, achieve an end to the occupation and advance a just and lasting peace.

Parliaments and inter-parliamentary organizations, and local governments

86. The Committee continued to attach great importance to developing its liaison with national and regional parliaments and their organizations. Representatives of parliaments and inter-parliamentary organizations participated in international events organized by the Committee during the reporting period. Among others, members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean and the Israeli Knesset participated in international meetings held under the auspices of the Committee. The Committee delegation held meetings with parliamentarians in Nicaragua and Mexico.

5. Research, monitoring and publications

87. The Division for Palestinian Rights carried out research and monitoring activities and responded to requests for information and briefings on the question of Palestine. Under the guidance of the Committee, the Division prepared the following publications for dissemination (see http://www.un.org/unispal):

(a) Monthly bulletin on action taken by the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations relevant to the question of Palestine;

(b) Reports of international meetings and conferences organized under the auspices of the Committee;

(c) Special bulletin and information notes on the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People;

(d) Annual compilation of resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly, Security Council and Economic and Social Council relating to the question of Palestine;

(e) Periodic reviews of developments related to the Middle East peace process.

6. United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine

88. The Division for Palestinian Rights, in cooperation with relevant services of the Secretariat, continued to administer, maintain, expand and upgrade the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine to heighten international awareness of the question of Palestine as well as international support for the rights of the Palestinian people and a just, peaceful solution through the work of the Committee. The Division also maintained its Facebook, Twitter and YouTube pages to disseminate information about the work on the question of Palestine by the Committee and the entities of the United Nations system.

7. Capacity-building programme for staff of the Government of the State of Palestine

89. As mandated by General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 71/20, and as part of its ongoing efforts to further expand the capacity-building programme for staff of the Government of the State of Palestine aimed at supporting the Government in enhancing the viability and sustainability of the future independent State of Palestine, the Division for Palestinian Rights organized and administered a number of capacity-building initiatives in consultation with the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations in New York. They included mobilizing international and regional support and resources, including within the framework of South-South and triangular cooperation, for national efforts with respect to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, which pledges to "leave no one behind".

90. In October and November 2016, the Division organized the annual training programme for the staff of the Government of the State of Palestine in New York and Geneva, respectively. The training programmes allow Palestinian staff to familiarize themselves with various aspects of the multilateral work of the Secretariat and other United Nations organs and bodies, including the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, as well as the United Nations Office in Geneva. In addition, in November 2016 the Division organized, in cooperation with the UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education, a four-day training course on water conflict management for Palestinian civil servants in Ramallah, designed for water managers, decision makers and others involved in

integrated water resource management and negotiation. In the same month, the Committee funded the participation of Palestinian staff in an online course entitled "Introduction to Water Diplomacy", developed by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), to enhance their ability to assess, prevent and respond to tensions arising from situations of water scarcity and mismanagement. In March 2017, the Committee funded another online course through UNITAR, entitled "Climate Change Diplomacy: Negotiating Effectively under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change", enhancing the understanding of the climate change policy framework by building an appreciation of the science, causes and impacts of climate change and the history of the policymaking process. Finally, in April, the Division organized, in Beirut, a workshop on the Sustainable Development Goals entitled "Partnerships for Empowering a Future State of Palestine: Sustainable Development Goal 17 and South-South and Triangular Cooperation".

91. The Committee paid special attention to expanding the pool of potential participants to all offices and departments of the Government of the State of Palestine and optimizing the use of resources to allow the maximum number of participants possible. The Committee remains of the view that in selecting candidates for its capacity-building and training programme, special consideration should be given to achieving gender balance; of the 41 Palestinian individuals trained during the reporting period, 23 were men and 18 were women.

8. International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

92. The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was observed on 29 November 2016 at Headquarters, the United Nations offices in Vienna, Geneva, and Nairobi and at the United Nations Information Centres and other entities in many cities throughout the world. At Headquarters, the Committee held a special meeting with the participation of the Deputy Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council, and organized an exhibit entitled "Palestinian Embroidery: Threads of Continuity, Identity and Empowerment".

93. The Committee also facilitated a presentation by Randa Siniora, General Director of the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling, and Ignacio Álvarez-Ossorio, professor in the Department of Arab and Islamic Studies of Alicante University, at the colloquium entitled "General Overview of the Human Rights Situation in Palestine — Perspectives from the International Community and Academia", held on 18 November 2017 in Bogota, organized to mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Chapter VI

Action taken by the Department of Public Information in accordance with General Assembly resolution 71/22

94. During the reporting period, the Department of Public Information continued to implement its special information programme on the question of Palestine in accordance with General Assembly resolution 71/22 of 30 November 2016.

95. The Department organized its annual training programme for Palestinian journalists, from 7 November to 8 December, in which nine Palestinian media practitioners attended meetings and participated in discussions at United Nations Headquarters in New York and in Washington, D.C., and travelled to Doha to undergo a training course at Al Jazeera.

96. The Department continued to produce and disseminate news and information about the range of issues and developments related to the question of Palestine and the Middle East peace process on all its multimedia and multilingual platforms. All open intergovernmental meetings on the subject were covered by United Nations Television, the United Nations Photo Unit and United Nations Web TV. In addition, the Department produced a total of 76 press releases covering meetings, in both English and French.

97. The multilingual United Nations News Centre, and the Arabic unit in particular, produced numerous features on the question of Palestine, including a series of interviews with senior officials and policymakers. The Centre also produced stories from the field, for example, on the electricity and water crisis in the Gaza Strip.

98. The *Yearbook of the United Nations* reported regularly on relevant statements, resolutions, events and actions taken by the Committee.

99. The Department's global network of United Nations Information Centres organized a number of outreach activities, and translated and disseminated information materials on the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. For example, the Information Centre in Tehran organized a workshop on the Plan of Partition for Palestine (resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947); the Information Centre in New Delhi organized its second International Utopia Model United Nations Conference, raising awareness on the question of Palestine with youth; and the Information Centre in Warsaw galvanized youth to join a panel discussion with the visiting UNRWA Commissioner-General. Further activities and events were organized by a number of Information Centres in November 2016 to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, including in Canberra, Dakar, Dar es Salaam, Manama, Nairobi, New Delhi and Tehran.

Chapter VII
Conclusions and recommendations of the Committee

100. In the fiftieth year of the Israeli occupation, the Committee **urges the international community to redouble its efforts aimed at achieving, without delay, a negotiated peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine** in all its aspects through an end to the Israeli occupation, the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and independence, and achievement of the two-State solution in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

101. In its continued support to the revitalization of peace efforts, the Committee aligns itself with the view that the model of bilateral negotiations, which after more than two decades has not brought about the end of the Israeli occupation and the full independence of the State of Palestine on the basis of the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, should be revised. The Committee welcomes serious steps taken by the international community towards presenting **an expanded multilateral framework, including key regional partners**, with a view to reviving the peace process and a credible political horizon.

102. As has consistently emerged during meetings of the General Assembly and the Security Council, as well as the international meetings organized by the Committee, any resolution of the conflict will remain central to peace and stability throughout the volatile Middle East region and the world. As such, the conflict clearly **requires a comprehensive regional solution** that includes greater engagement with key Arab States and other concerned States. The Arab Peace Initiative remains a significant contribution to such a regional settlement. The Committee supports those efforts and will continue its enhanced cooperation with the LAS and OIC. The Committee also welcomes the contributions of other States in the region and outside the Middle East in exerting their influence to reach a peaceful solution of the question of Palestine.

103. The Committee urges the Security Council, which has a primary responsibility for maintaining peace and security under the Charter of the United Nations, and the General Assembly to play a constructive role in **ensuring fullest accountability and implementation of the long-standing parameters for peace reiterated in the relevant United Nations resolutions** in order to resolve the conflict. Positive consideration should be given to all proposals that endeavour to overcome the current impasse. In that regard, the Committee welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), which reaffirmed that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, had no legal validity, and called for affirmative steps to be taken immediately to reverse the negative trends on the ground that are imperilling the two-State solution, thus generating a unique momentum for peace which needs to be maintained. Pursuant to paragraph 12 of the resolution, **the Committee** requests the **Secretary-General to present his third and subsequent reports to the Council on the implementation of the provisions of the resolution in a written format and to propose practical ways and means to hold Israel accountable for its illegal settlement activities and other violations**.

104. The Committee acknowledges that **intra-Palestinian relations** are an obstacle to progress towards an independent State of Palestine. Serious efforts are required to overcome mistrust between the parties, including through confidence-building efforts, and calls for a demonstration of the courage and leadership that is required at the present time. The **Committee offers its services and support to local, regional and international efforts, from any *country and/or organization that is* able to advance the process**.

105. Recalling the upcoming **seventieth anniversary of the expulsion of Palestine refugees from their homeland in 1948, remembered as the "Nakba"** (catastrophe), the Committee emphasizes the importance of the acknowledgment of that event and its impact upon the Palestinian people as a necessary requirement for a viable and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians, as well as for future reconciliation. It strongly advocates for **the right to return** (or compensation) of the Palestine refugees, as provided for in paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The Committee further encourages all Member States to work collectively to more sufficiently and predictably **fund UNRWA** as it is confronted with an increased demand for services resulting from widespread instability and socioeconomic decline in all fields of operation and the deepening poverty and vulnerability of the Palestine refugee population, particularly in the Gaza Strip, while facing severe shortfalls in budget, affecting the Agency's capacity to provide assistance and protection in accordance with its mandate.

106. The Committee reiterates that the international community must intensify its efforts, uphold its moral and legal responsibility and **demand an end to the 10-year old Israeli air, land and sea blockade of Gaza** and the lifting of all closures within the framework of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). It notes that, two years after the devastating 2014 war, the reconstruction of Gaza has made some important strides. However, clean water, sanitation and electricity still remain scarce, and the fact that over 65,000 persons remain displaced continues to cause widespread suffering and has a significant impact upon an already dire humanitarian situation. The Committee calls upon **international donors to fulfil without delay all pledges** in order to expedite the provision of humanitarian assistance and the reconstruction process, essential for alleviating the distress of Palestinians, including women and children, and to support an urgent move from humanitarian assistance to development.

107. Ultimately, to ensure respect for the rights of the Palestinian people, to prevent deterioration beyond the breaking point and to stop the build-destroy-rebuild cycle, the Committee **recommends shifting from a humanitarian to a political and human rights framework**, which would take into account the legal obligations of all stakeholders, including in context of the Gaza Strip. A Palestinian unity government is also essential to take up governance and security functions in Gaza and exercise control over the crossings.

108. The Committee reiterates that **violations of humanitarian and human rights law must be investigated, and that perpetrators of such violations should be brought to justice**. The Committee expresses its concern at the limited implementation by Israel, the occupying Power, of the findings and recommendations contained in the report of the independent commission of inquiry on the 2014 Gaza conflict and of all other human rights recommendations directed at Israel. The Committee welcomes the appointment of Stanley Michael Lynk as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 and will strive to facilitate the implementation of his mandate.

109. The Committee **underscores the responsibility of States and private entities not to contribute to grave Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights**, particularly in respect of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. It looks forward to the establishment of a database of all actors conducting business in areas under Israeli military occupation, as mandated by Human Rights Council resolution 31/36 of 2016. Within the context of that resolution and in accordance with paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), which calls upon States to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967, the Committee urges further steps by Governments, private businesses and other

relevant bodies, including the European Union, to dissociate themselves from policies that directly or indirectly grant legitimacy to or support for illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the occupation at large.

110. The **Committee notes with appreciation the useful contribution of the Division for Palestinian Rights** in support of its mandate and its activities through the following:

(a) Efficient provision of substantive and secretariat support, including to official meetings of the Committee as well as informal meetings of the Bureau and Committee visits to the field, and effective liaison with and strategic guidance to the Committee, its Bureau and the Working Group; organization of briefings, including for new Committee delegates; execution of the decisions of the Committee, including by preparing Committee correspondence to national authorities and regional organizations; and timely preparation and issuance of the necessary parliamentary documentation;

(b) Organization of four international meetings and conferences contributing to the sustained level of dialogue, engagement and support on the part of the international community for the Committee's programme objectives, as evidenced by the number and level of participation in its international meetings and conferences, and commemorations of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People;

(c) An increase in international awareness of United Nations policies and activities relating to the question of Palestine, through the preparation of publications and information materials and their widest possible dissemination; and maintenance, upgrading and continued development of *The Question of Palestine* website as well as the use of such web-based social information networks as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube;

(d) Enhanced assistance and support to the Government of the State of Palestine in building efficient, accountable and resilient institutions through workshops and training of Palestinian civil servants, particularly in the light of its efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda;

(e) Continued involvement of civil society organizations in support of the efforts of the Committee and the United Nations towards a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine.

111. The Committee will **continue, through its mandated activities implemented by the Division for Palestinian Rights, to generate heightened international awareness on the question of Palestine, as well as international support for the rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and independence, in this year marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Israeli occupation and the seventieth anniversary of the General Assembly resolution to partition Palestine.**

112. The Committee requests the **Division to continue its substantive and secretariat support of all aspects of its mandate**; the organization of the annual observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People; the programme of international meetings and conferences; the programme of research, monitoring and publications and other informational activities in support of the Committee's communications strategy; and the expansion of the training and capacity-building programme, taking into account the National Policy Agenda of the State of Palestine and its efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. In that context, the Committee recognizes the growing importance of *cooperation among developing countries and regional and subregional organizations* for sharing and implementing sustainable, cost-effective and replicable experiences

and solutions that work, and supports special efforts by the Division to **facilitate such exchanges within the framework of South-South and triangular cooperation.** Lastly, it **urges Committee Members and observer States and others to actively participate in its programme, including through voluntary contributions** to offer training experiences and to put the programmes on a solid financial footing.

113. The Committee is of the view that the **special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information** has made an important contribution to informing the media and the public of the relevant issues. It requests the continuation of the programme, with the necessary flexibility warranted by developments relevant to the question of Palestine.

114. The Committee highly **values civil society initiatives** in support of the Palestinian people and will continue to expand its efforts to engage additional civil society organizations, including by convening regular civil society forums, and the public at large in its work to support a just and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine, including in Israel. The **Committee encourages civil society partners to work with their national Governments, parliamentarians and other institutions with a view to gaining their full support for the work of the United Nations and the Committee, and for the overall aim of promoting the achievement by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights, full recognition of the State of Palestine and its independence**. Furthermore, following the productive engagement with the Palestinian diaspora during the reporting period, the Committee will continue to expand the engagement, with a view to synergizing efforts to raise awareness and gain practical support for a just solution to the question of Palestine and for the socioeconomic development of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

115. Wishing to make its contribution to the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, and in view of the many difficulties facing the Palestinian people and their leadership and besetting the peace process, the **Committee intends to work closely with other United Nations actors on the ground**, including the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and UNRWA, to synergize efforts in fields of common concern and uphold the permanent responsibility of the Organization towards the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all its aspects in a satisfactory manner in accordance with international legitimacy (General Assembly resolution 71/20, last preambular paragraph). The Committee wishes to express its deep **appreciation to its partners, in particular OIC, for the contribution of extrabudgetary resources and their active participation in its conferences and events.**

116. The Committee will also **reach out to all regional groups at the United Nations with a view to expanding its membership**. It calls upon all States to join it in this endeavour and to extend their cooperation and support to the Committee, and invites the General Assembly again to recognize the importance of its role and to reconfirm its mandate.

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